**The Grand Vision**

**City of Frankfort, Benzie County**

The City of Frankfort is a relatively small, rural, coastal community of approximately 1,500 year-round residents in the process of change. Due to our location and desirability as a "summer" resort community, the population of Frankfort swells during the summer months. Historically, the City served the region as a lumbering community, major shipping port and an agricultural center for fruit distribution. As we continue into the 21st Century, we find ourselves transitioning from these industrial, rural roots to a scenic waterfront resort/tourist community with goals of sustaining a year-round “New Economy” while being able to facilitate growth. In an emerging resort community such as Frankfort, the essential land use of the area is of primary significance. Lake Michigan and Betsie Lake are certainly our communities’ most significant natural assets and the major attraction to visitors from all over the country. Our long term goal is to be able to proceed with the desirable development and smart growth that enhances our resources, contributes to our overall social and economic well being, promotes entrepreneurial opportunities and yet maintain the rural, small town character which makes us pleasurable. The City of Frankfort is in the process of implementing sound policies and regulations that is consistent with all of the goals established with the Grand Vision Project and what is essential to succeed in the New Economy.

**Growth & Investment**

The City of Frankfort has been very proactive toward positive Growth and Investment in our community. Much of the enhancement Frankfort has endured over the past 10 years is a direct result of successful communication, aggressive procurement of grant funds and partnerships established with those that are dedicated within the community.

Individuals interested in an enhanced quality of life, seek quality education, walkable and safe communities, small town connectivity, high quality natural features, parks, recreation, along with a committed and invested public government. The City of Frankfort has come together as a community to achieve an enhanced opportunity through various capital improvement projects and the creation of the Master Plan, Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance. These documents will enable the community to facilitate the necessary growth and investment to succeed in the “New Economy”.

Because of the outstanding quality of life available in Frankfort, this City has a recruitment advantage over similarly sized communities in Michigan and across the upper Midwest. While it takes considerable effort to recruit and attract this type of investment, there is strong evidence that the City’s aggressive steps to create an enhanced sustainable community have started the process. The timing of the new Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance has the City well positioned to market this sustainable vision of the future and leverage the quality of life, physical and cultural amenities available in surrounding counties.

The City of Frankfort has taken aggressive steps to implement the “Grand Vision” and create a unique sense of community that will add to the enhancement of our region. The community has adopted the philosophy “That it takes a community to build a better community”. The City government has taken a lead toward enhancement of the social and economic well-being of the community and that leadership has flourished into an overall partnership with the community that is positioning Frankfort as a vital stakeholder in the Grand Vision project. The City of Frankfort is blessed to have the award winning Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital, nationally recognized and tradition-rich Frankfort/Elberta Area Schools, Benzie Shores District Library, Frankfort City/County Airport, Crystal Lake Art Center, Betsie Lake Utility Authority (BLUA) and numerous, successful businesses, residents and service organizations that shape the quality of life we experience.

The following public investment projects have set the tone toward achieving a sustainable, vibrant community adding to the overall growth and investment of the region:

1. **Adoption of the new Zoning Ordinance**: Currently, the new Zoning Ordinance for the City of Frankfort has been through a series of review facilitated by the Planning Commission and the public. Countless hours have been spent scrutinizing and amending the document along with numerous public discussions that were conducted to insure that all new and revised regulations meet the needs of the community. Throughout the process, well over 350 individuals participated in the creation of the New Master and Zoning Ordinance. The Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance Project initially started in 2004 but it wasn’t until 2009 that the City made significant progress with the procurement of two grants from the MDEQ Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program totaling in the amount of $57,500.00. These funds, along with a substantial amount of in-kind donations and City funds enabled the City to retain the services of Wade Trim, Inc. to assist in the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance re-write process. The total direct cost for the Zoning Ordinance Project is $35,000.00, whereas $32,500.00 was covered by the CZM grant and $2,500.00 paid directly by the City. However, an additional +/- $30,000.00 has been contributed through in-kind donations. Currently, the new Zoning Ordinance is before the City Council for review as it was introduced at the December 14th City Council meeting. The final adoption will occur at a subsequent meeting on or before January 18, 2011. The new Zoning Ordinance has components of “Form Based Methods and Smart Code Initiatives” to achieve its potential for Smart Growth and be on the cutting edge in the 21st Century. The regulations will place a strong emphasis on design and a keen sense of place for development opportunity. The New Designs for Growth Guidebook provided principles to aid in the Zoning Ordinance process. The existing Zoning Ordinance, which was adopted in 1999, has an underlying disparity to the Master Plan that was adopted in 1998. In essence, the existing Zoning Ordinance cannot accommodate the goals and objectives of the 1998 Master Plan without rezoning or amendments being initiated, which has caused some contentious public debate. This was a significant problem as we continue to strive toward Smart Growth development within the community. As we proceed toward completion of the new Zoning Ordinance Project it was imperative that we maintain momentum by engaging the public and utilize the new Master Plan as a guide to enable the desires of the community to become a reality through the establishment of a new, progressive Zoning Ordinance. The Proposed Zoning Ordinance can be viewed on the City of Frankfort website at [www.frankfortmich.com](http://www.frankfortmich.com). Smart Growth components that have been initiated in the new Zoning Ordinance include but are not limited to the following:
   * **Ancillary Living Space:** In all residential zones, Ancillary Living Units are allowed as long as certain design and site guidelines are followed. These additional living units shall be a freestanding, single-unit apartment located behind the primary dwelling or an extension of an existing residence in a residential area. These units will often be located above a detached garage. The footprint and height shall be proportionate to the primary dwelling.
   * **Home Occupations (Live/Work Units):** In an effort to encourage entrepreneurship and additional investment in the community, the City of Frankfort will be adopting a Home Occupation standard that will be relieved of all permitting requirements as long as minor site and operational guidelines are met.
   * **Mixed-Use Development:** The new Zoning Ordinance has laid the foundation to encourage and permit Mixed-Use Development in all commercial zones, excluding the Industrial-Entrepreneurial District. Mixed-Use Development will generate additional investment through the combination of residential, commercial and/or office uses.
   * **Building Configuration:** A tremendous amount of emphasis has been placed within the regulations of the Zoning Ordinance to encourage and facilitate certain design standards. The City of Frankfort analyzed past variance requests and determined that minor setback changes were necessary to preserve the historic character of certain residential districts. Also, building height issues were addressed to enable compact design and intensity in the core downtown business district, thus preserving valuable open space that the public seeks as a component of their quality of life in Frankfort.
   * **Urban Agriculture:** The City of Frankfort strives to encourage personal and community scale local food production within defined areas inside the City. Providing opportunities for urban agriculture creates food independence and security for City residents, provides access to fresh food that does not lose quality in long transportation and provides opportunities for entrepreneurship. Organic practices are encouraged to minimize additional threats to water pollution and groundwater contamination. Guidelines are established to facilitate Kitchen Gardens, Community Gardens, Market Garden and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Garden, Apiculture, Chickens and Rabbits (Hens Only), and Goats. Livestock is prohibited and there are numerous standards to control the Urban Agriculture Environment.
2. **Adoption of New Master Plan:** The City of Frankfortrecently adopted (May 11, 2010) a new Master Plan that will intensify our partnership with the Village of Elberta and Crystal Lake Township in order to strengthen our preservation of our coastal resources and economic development opportunity. The City of Frankfort Master Plan was funded through a combination of funds provided by the MDEQ Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program, City of Frankfort, and in-kind contributions and is in full compliance of the Planning Enabling Act of 2008 (PA 33 of 2008). The total direct cost of the new Master Plan was $35,000.00, whereas $25,000.00 was covered by the CZM grant and $10,000.00 paid directly by the City. However an additional amount of +/- $48,600.00 has been contributed through in-kind donations. The new Master Plan was generated through a transparent process over an 18 month period led by citizens that possessed the desire and vision to enable a more sustainable tomorrow. The Frankfort City Master Plan serves as a guide to coordinate land-use patterns, economic growth, housing choices, mixed-use opportunity, transportation needs, energy independence, and environmental protection over the next 50 years. The guiding principles of the Grand Vision project were utilized in the creation of the Frankfort City Master Plan. It was the intent of the City to have a Master Plan in place that will enable the principles set forth in the Grand Vision process to be implemented to fit the needs and values of the Frankfort community, thus we are putting into action the Frankfort Grand Vision. In addition to the above-mentioned ideology, the City has placed a high level of importance on renewable energy research, planning and siting in order to effectively foster the efficient use of emerging, innovative technologies while establishing parameters that will further preserve our coastal resources. In an effort to move beyond the heavy industrial past, the City of Frankfort needs to be creative to enhance the existing knowledge-base that promotes entrepreneurial, recreational, and an inspired culture which supports the high quality of life evolved within the community that will enable us to prosper as we engage in the “New Economy”.
3. **Virtual Frankfort:** In addition to the work performed on the new Master Plan and the nearly adopted Zoning Ordinance, the City of Frankfort wishes to implement a complete and detailed VR (virtual reality) computerized model of the commercial areas of the City. The VR computerized model is a state-of-the-art and innovative visualization tool for public meetings and will serve as a future land use depiction of the community in order to effectively establish the community fully developed. The VR model will also serve as a tool to study the implications of alternative development projects, thus enabling creative, smart development that would provide economic and social benefit to the community. The virtual model will be created illustrating the City as it is today and through community input established through the Master Plan process and guidelines established with the Zoning Ordinance, an additional model will be created illustrating the commercial areas of the City fully developed through the community involvement process. Also, the virtual model, through the fully built out model, will encourage investment, thus goals and objectives set forth in the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance can be accomplished. Essentially, the computer model illustrating the community totally redeveloped and developed will serve as the future land use portion of the Community Master Plan and will also function as a marketing tool to encourage growth and investment in the community.

Currently, a portion of downtown encompassing the Main Street corridor from Michigan Avenue to 8th Street is complete in an as-built depiction. It is a desire of the City of Frankfort to continue with the Virtual Modeling project to include a complete model of all commercial areas within the City in an as-built state as well as a fully built out model illustrating all of the commercial areas fully developed. This will include a +/- 13 acre area along the east end of Betsie bay that could serve as a vibrant, mixed-use, working waterfront including but not limited to a high-speed ferry terminal, cruise ship terminal, other marine uses, and supporting commercial/retail mixed with housing. Project goals would include completion of the entire Main Street corridor in an as-built state and perform a total build out model encompassing all commercial areas within the City. It is a goal that these virtual model areas will provide a vision of how the community would look through community involvement achieved in the creation of the Master Plan and guidelines established in the new Zoning Ordinance. The model will serve as a Land Use visioning guide as well as to serve as a marketing tool for growth and investment. The City of Frankfort is currently working with a computer simulation consultant (CitySimulation) based in Plymouth, Michigan and it is a desire to further establish this working relationship to carry out a complete model. Design criteria and density will be guided through the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance guidelines and principles. The completed project will be a function of collaboration between the City Superintendent, Frankfort Planning Commission, Frankfort City Council, and members of the community with the virtual model consultant. It is anticipated that the remaining Virtual Model Project will be completed by July 2010 at a cost of $18,000.00.

The revitalization of the Master Plan with land use, planning and zoning based on modern standards of “form based” and “virtual simulation” planning will result in increased economic vitality.  Economic vitality and independence will result from increased population density without the symptomatic conditions that might occur with uncontrolled development (sprawl), infrastructure inadequacies and congestion conditions detrimental to the natural environment and the maintenance of “small town” characteristics of a walkable community

**4**. **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD):** The Master Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Virtual Model Project(s) are primary components of the City of Frankfort “Grand Vision” project but it will also be supported with an Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) inventory. An ABCD inventory meshes with our continuing needs to become a sustainable community. We want to build a better community from the inside out and our ultimate goal through the ABCD inventory is to connect people to further enhance our social and economic well-being. We are seeking and are prepared to enter into this venture with a full-blown capacity inventory, with detailed questions about peoples’ skills and knowledge. Once we attain a combination of local assets and capacities we will be well on our way toward regenerating the stability of the community. The ABCD inventory coupled with the New Comprehensive Development Plan will establish our ability to be self reliant through creative resources already available within our community. Essentially, it is a goal to have a web-based data base (tool box) that will provide an inventory of all goods and services that every business in Benzie County provides. Also, we would like to have an established list of all individuals in Benzie County willing to participate that exploits their knowledge and skills. Just by providing this data and making it available via the web and by hard copy, it would be a primary goal to enhance inter-business commerce, generate potential jobs linking knowledge and skills of individuals, and promote entrepreneurship. In addition to the economic component of the list it would be desired that the inventory be expanded to include a list of all non-profits and their pertinent mission, church organizations, and a detailed list of community projects. Benzie County is wealthy in regards to the knowledge and skills of its residents, however no such database exists and by providing this resource I believe the community will strive toward economic and social sustainability.

The purpose of the ABCD approach is to shift the focus from needs, deficiencies and problems to how we, as a community, can become stronger and more self-reliant by discovering our strengths, gifts, talents and skills. By establishing and utilizing this worthwhile “tool” we will achieve a creative synergy that will empower this community to strive and succeed in the “New Economy” through regenerating itself. By conducting an inventory of our community assets, I believe we will experience a positive enhancement toward entrepreneurship, job creation, commerce, community pride, and the way we view our community. We are a firm believer that it takes a community to build a better community. Once this project is completed I can visualize utilization of this inventory to serve as a model, whereas an ABCD inventory can carry on and mesh with a similar inventory in all counties within the jurisdiction of the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments. Currently, the City has hosted one workshop on this ABCD project in October 2009. The City is receiving some technical assistance from Rural Partners of Michigan, however it is necessary to provide adequate funding to establish a web site with additional funding granted to a local individual(s) with strong computer and networking ability in order fully implement the social and economic network.

This project will require an intense collaboration with the Frankfort-Elberta Area Chamber of Commerce, Benzie County Chamber of Commerce, non-profit organization, church organizations, and as many members of the community as possible. It is the primary goal to have a web-based social and economic network providing critical information associated toward connecting the community. This project will primarily consist of the entire Benzie County community and will likely serve as a “pilot” model for other communities in the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments region. Some of the positive attributes of this project include the following:

* + Create a database of existing goods and services located at existing businesses to encourage additional inter-business commerce and provide a list to the community of those goods and services that may have been perceived to be non-existent in the community.
  + Develop new enterprises, based on an inventory of skills and knowledge that would link individuals with similar abilities.
  + Link skills and knowledge to employers, when ABCD inventories are accompanied by a parallel set of interviews with employers in the county regarding their workforce and hiring preferences.
  + Discover market opportunities and indentify un-served or underserved consumer markets. What new business could co-exist in the community that will further enhance inter-business commerce and offer a good or service that would otherwise have to be achieved outside the community?
  + Develop local skills bank, also based on an inventory of skills and knowledge such as former teachers, skilled laborers, business managers, etc.
  + Institute a “Learning Exchange”, by asking people both “What would you like to teach?” and “What would you like to learn?”
  + Discover new participants in community life and projects.
  + Discover new cultural and artistic resources.
  + Provide a detailed list of services and/or support offered by other governmental agencies and non-profit organizations.

The primary activity to be achieved is to get people involved so a database can be created. Beyond that, the database will be ever-changing, due to technology advancements and growth. This work will be completed by the people for the people but will be lead by the City of Frankfort.

1. **Phase I and Phase II City of Frankfort Utility Project:** The City of Frankfort completed in October 2010, a +/- $2.5 million improvement project involving a complete sanitary/storm sewer separation, water main and lead replacement, sanitary sewer main and lead replacement, storm sewer main replacement and various road and curb infrastructure throughout the City. The project encompassed complete renovation to infrastructure located on Leelanau Avenue, James Street, 8th Street, Anchor Place, Harbor Place, Port Place, Bellows Avenue, Corning Avenue, and Baldwin Street. This project(s) was funded with a USDA low-interest loan and did not require a special millage nor were rates increased due to the debt schedule. In addition to the functional and aesthetic enhancements to the right-of-way, the water distribution system was improved through enhanced water quality and fire suppression. The inflow and infiltration experienced throughout the sanitary sewer system was eliminated, thus a significant savings associated with treatment was a direct result. In addition to the cost savings associated to the treatment of the sanitary sewer, the wastewater treatment plant captured additional capacity.
2. **2010 Launch Ramp Enhancement Project:** The City of Frankfort received two (2) grants to complete the $216,000.00 renovation to the Frankfort City Launch Ramp. The project was funded through a grant in the amount of $113,250.00 from the MDNR and a $99,000.00 grant from HUD, thus only $3,750.00 was required as a cash match from the City of Frankfort. The project included an expansion to the launch ramp from eight (8) slips to ten (10), addition of a floating fishing pier/dinghy dock, replacement of parking and ramp lighting, dredging of the ramp area and restoration and striping to the asphalt parking area. The project was suspended in November 2010, with final completion slated for May 2011.
3. **Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital Acute Care Addition:** Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital commenced an addition of eight (8) acute care beds and other miscellaneous improvements in November 2010 with a completion slated for spring 2011. *Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital was one of only 14 hospitals in the nation to receive a 2009 Summit Award for emergency care from Press Ganey Associates, Inc. The Summit Award was presented ranking in the top 5 percent in the nation for patient satisfaction for 12 consecutive quarters. Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital also received the 2009 Michigan Rural Health Quality Improvement Award of Excellence for its commitment to quality care and evidence-based medicine in the area of emergency room transfers. The hospital has repeatedly received the Governor’s Award of Excellence for Improving Patient safety and Quality of care in the Critical Access Setting. The award is aimed at hospitals that continually improve patient care. Paul Oliver memorial Hospital is a part of Munson Healthcare Network.*
4. **Crystal Lake Art Center:** The City of Frankfort procured the 9,600 SF United States Coast Guard Facility through the Federal lands to Parks Program in 2006 upon completion of the new Coast Guard Station Frankfort. The facility was constructed in 1934 to facilitate a crew of 12 Coast Guard personnel and their rescue boats. The historic structure was a tremendous asset to the City of Frankfort and it was best determined that the facility be renovated to be utilized as a Community Arts Center. After careful due diligence, a partnership was formed between the City of Frankfort and the Crystal Lake Art Center to completely renovate the structure to provide two large galleries and multiple classrooms on three levels to facilitate a roster of educational programs. The plan also includes space for a proposed dance studio, as well for the art center’s administrative offices. The $2.5 million renovation encompasses a complete renovation to the 9,600 SF facility plus a 2,700 SF addition including the installation of an elevator and site/parking amenities. The $2.5 million raised was a result of a combination of grants and donations. The project commenced in June 2010 with completion anticipated in early summer 2011.
5. **Betsie Lake Utility Authority (BLUA):** BLUA is the wastewater treatment facility for the City of Frankfort and Village of Elberta. The facility was constructed in 1992. During 2006 through 2009, BLUA performed +/- $3 million in upgrades to the facility including a second oxidation ditch, additional sludge treatment tank and msc. equipment to facilitate septic tank and holding tank waste. All of these major upgrades were paid for with cash on hand, thus neither additional debt nor fees to the constituents were issued. The plant will accommodate all of the future demands that the City of Frankfort and Village of Elberta can endure. Essentially, the City of Frankfort and the Village of Elberta can double in population and not negatively impact the capacity of the facility.
6. **Benzie Shores District Library:** In 2010, the Benzie Shores District Library performed +/- $320,000.00 in interior improvements to the facility. All of the expense associated with the interior renovation was procured through grant funds and private donations. Enhancements include creation of additional barrier free space, new furnishings, computer upgrades and expansion of available computers and additional space to accommodate lap top users that take advantage of the free Wi-Fi. The facility underwent vast expansion in the early 1990’s as the City administered library was transferred to a District Library. The conversion to a District Library has resulted in an enhanced facility expanding the needs to residents in the City of Frankfort, Village of Elberta, Crystal Lake Township, Lake Township, Blaine Township and Gilmore Township.
7. **The Maples Medical Care Facility:** In November 2010 the voters of Benzie County approved a millage that authorized a +/- $13.4 million expansion and renovation to the Maples Medical Care Facility located in Frankfort. The expansion actually did not cost the tax payers of Benzie County as the existing 1 mill operating millage was broken into two components associated with operational expense and building expense. So, in essence the residents of Benzie County will have a new state of the facility at the same millage rate. The $13.4 million upgrade will create an expansion and renovation from the existing +/-38,000 SF facility to a +/-81,200 SF facility. The new facility will be far more energy efficient than the existing facility and will increase capacity from 62 beds to 78 beds. Another positive component of the project is the conversion of shared suites and bathrooms to providing private suites and baths which will truly enhance the quality of life for residents. The project will encompass an improved ability to foster Alzheimer’s patients. It is uncertain on the amount additional job creation but the expansion will require additional full-time and part-time employment opportunity.

**12. Marina Master Plan:** In 2009, the City of Frankfort created a new Marina Master Plan that will serve as a guide for future improvements to the City of Frankfort Municipal Marina. The total project cost was $25,000.00, of which $12,500.00 was funded through the MDNRE Waterways Commission. The balance of $12,500.00 was funded through reserve dollars established within the Marina Enterprise Account. Additional grant submittals to the MDNRE Waterways Commission are proposed in the near future to facilitate various improvement projects established within the Marina Master Plan.

The above listed projects represent only public improvement projects that have occurred since 2006 in the City of Frankfort that have enhanced Growth and Investment opportunity. This assessment does not represent the numerous amount of private investment that has occurred within the community over the past five years. In addition to the above-mentioned projects, the City of Frankfort constructed a $1.3 million New City Hall in 2005 and a $1 million New Fire Station in 2006 as well as performed +/-$1.6 million in additional capital improvement projects, of which $1.4 million was funded through grant procurements, benefitting park and recreation, the municipal marina, streets and the fire department. Currently, the City of Frankfort is working on the establishment of Broadband Internet Service via Wi-Fi and with the recent advancements of the “Middle Mile” section of Broadband. We are slowly getting closer to offer this vital infrastructure. To aid in this effort a recent appropriations request was submitted through Senator Levin’s office to provide video surveillance throughout the community. A key component to the video surveillance system requires a Wi-Fi network. We were well on our way in 2008 to offer Wi-Fi throughout the core Downtown District through AT&T via a DS1 network; however the expansion of Broadband to the region shifted our focus.

The City of Frankfort is able to meet all future growth demands due to the proactive approach to enhance infrastructure throughout the City. The City will be able to accommodate 100% growth through a water and wastewater distribution system that is well below current capacity and demand.

**Housing**

The Proposed Zoning Ordinance and newly adopted Master Plan promotes that residential development must include a wide variety of building types and is not restricted to detached single family homes. The new Zoning Ordinance provides guidelines that will enable a wide range of building types including but not limited to apartments and other multi-family buildings, duplexes, accessory dwelling units (ancillary living spaces), attached single family units (townhomes) mixed-use buildings and detached single family homes. Housing choice needs will range from affordability to high-end. The following projects that have been recently completed and currently underway include the following affordable housing projects:

* + 1. **Gateway Village:** Gateway Village is a 36-unit, partially LEED Certified, Affordable Housing Project comprised of one, two and three bedroom units that was completed in September 2010. The project is funded utilizing the Tax-Exempt Bond Program with TCAP funds through MSHDA with the help of local financing. The project was also aided through an approved PILOT Ordinance from the City of Frankfort. Hollander Development is the primary sponsor of the project and was awarded a $75,000.00 Michigan Green Communities Grant as well as a separate green build grant in the amount of $91,200.00 from MSHDA for the implementation of sustainable building features including a geo-thermal HVAC system for one of the four buildings. The development replaced an aging warehouse and industrial facility that was well beyond the useful life of the structure(s) and has provided an enhancement to the M-115/M-22 corridor entering the City.
    2. **Patterson Crossing:** Patterson Crossing will preserve 56 units of affordable family housing in the City of Frankfort using the Tax-Exempt Bond Program with Section 1602 funds. Patterson Crossing will be a complete interior and exterior renovation, including site amenities to two (2) existing facilities formerly known as Bayview Apartments comprised of one, two and three bedroom units in three, two-story buildings on two different sites. The aging facilities will receive a much-needed improvement that will enhance efficiency and provide modern amenities to residents. The project commenced in October 2010 with a total completion slated for June 2011.

**Transportation**

The City of Frankfort has adopted a complete street system that is facilitated through the new Zoning Ordinance to encourage and foster pedestrian and non-motorized circulation in all areas of the City while maintaining efficient and safe vehicular flow. The City of Frankfort, for the most part, is a full walkable and a non-motorized friendly community. The City, through budget control and procurement of grant funds is striving to achieve full compliance with the approved “Complete Street System” including having a sidewalk constructed on every street in the City. The Beach to Beach Trail was constructed in 2004 that connects the City of Frankfort Lake Michigan Beach with the Betsie Valley Trail. Approximately 7 miles of paved asphalt surface connects the Lake Michigan beach in Frankfort to the park/beach area on Crystal Lake through the beautiful Betsie River Watershed. The Betsie Valley Trail continues an additional 13 miles through the Village of Beulah to the Village of Thompsonville via a crushed and compact aggregate.

**BENZIE BUS**

Benzie Bus was launched in January 2007; the Benzie Bus system provides the public with county-wide bus service and daily round trips between the City of Frankfort and Traverse City. The bus system delivers curb side dial-a-ride service throughout Benzie County and regular, fixed-route transportation along M-115 and U.S. 31.

Benzie Bus maintains a fixed-route bus stop in the City of Frank­fort at Glen’s Market at 1002 Forest Avenue. All of the buses carry up to 15 passengers and feature wheelchair lifts, and most buses also include bicycle racks.

In 2009, the Benzie Bus system delivered about 70,000 one-way rides. About half of the riders were seniors and people with dis­abilities who pay a discounted fare, and about half were from the general population, including many commuters and customers traveling to local businesses. The Benzie Bus system picked up 13,206 passengers within the City of Frankfort in 2009, and de­livered 13,483 riders to destinations in the city, including homes, schools, and shops.

Some 58 percent of Benzie County voters in August 2006 ap­proved the creation and funding of the Benzie Bus system for five years, through late 2011. In the City of Frankfort, 65 percent of voters supported launching the bus system.

The mission of the Benzie Bus system is to connect people of all ages and abilities to the community and to promote indepen­dence and prosperity through a safe and convenient public tran­sit system. The bus system seeks to provide convenient service to residents and visitors who cannot, or do not choose to, drive, and to those who want to combine a bus trip with bicycling, walk­ing, or carpooling.

The Benzie Bus procured ARRA stimulus funds in the amount of $1,596,768.00 and an additional $1,475,000.00 in appropriation funds for a combined amount of $3,071,768.00 that have enabled the acquisition and development of its permanent headquarters east of Honor on U.S. 31, acquisition of new busses and other various equipment. These funds required no match from Benzie Bus. A renewal millage election is scheduled in May 2011. Benzie Bus is collaborating with other agencies to explore consolidating services, such as maintenance, in order to reduce costs and enhance service.

Approximately half of the Benzie Bus system’s $1.5 million an­nual operating budget comes from local passenger fares and the 0.50 mil property tax and the other half from state and federal funds, mostly gasoline taxes. Information about the Benzie Bus, including how to schedule a ride, is available at 231-325-3000 or toll free at 866-325-3380 and also online at [www.benziebus.com](http://www.benziebus.com)

**High-Speed Car Ferry**

The City of Frankfort is currently in the process of undergoing a feasibility and market study to establish if the region can facilitate a third cross-lake car ferry operation on Lake Michigan to Wisconsin. The Betsie Bay Harbor was home to the first cross lake ferry operation, however, the Ann Arbor Railroad went into receivership, thus the last car ferry sailed out of the harbor in 1982. The initial work on the studies is being performed by the Research Services Department at Northwestern Michigan College. Stay tuned on this venture because the City of Frankfort is confident that a third car ferry operation linking the Grand Traverse Region and Door County area in Wisconsin would be an enhancement to the region.

**Food and Farming**

The soon to be adopted City of Frankfort Zoning Ordinance strives to encourage personal and community scale local food production within defined areas inside the City of Frankfort. Providing opportunities for urban agriculture creates food independence and security for city residents, provides access to fresh food and provides opportunities for entrepreneurship. The City of Frankfort encourages organic practices in order to minimize and/or eliminate factors that contribute to water pollution and groundwater contamination. The new Zoning Ordinance fosters and encourages Kitchen Gardens, Community Gardens and Market and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Gardens. Apiculture and Goats will be permitted in the rural district within specified guidelines and Chickens (Hens) and Rabbits can be raised for food production ranging from four (4) to 12 depending on the zoning district. Specific guidelines are established to insure the safety and welfare of the community is achieved.

**Grow Benzie**

In September 2008 Grow Benzie established roots in the community through the acquisition of a former greenhouse on 3.7 acres on M-115 between Frankfort and Benzonia. The purpose of the facility is to serve as a community farmstead dedicated to enriching the lives of Benzie County residents by fostering self-reliance through education in agriculture, nutrition, job training and life skills. The vision will fulfill a year- round demonstration and training center for sustainable practices that will serve as symbol for hope and revitalization for the entire Benzie County community. The grass roots effort was created to be a rallying point for community gardens, greenhouses, teaching kitchens, classrooms and workshops. Through advantages of community assets, the focus is to raise healthy children by giving them a chance to realize their potential; to re- energize the community by teaching new skills, thus an achievement of confidence and independence will enable success in the New Economy. Grow Benzie, which is a work in progress, serves as an opportunity that will build on new ideas for independence through sustainable practices that will enable the community to be creative that will result in a stronger community benefitting our youth.

**Farmer's Markets**

The community supports three Farmer's Markets throughout April-October; Wednesday at Grow Benzie, Thursday at a park in the Village of Elberta and Saturday at Open Space Park in the City of Frankfort. Vendor participation is strong as numerous opportunities exist to exploit locally raised food and crafts. Throughout November-April the Farmer's Market continues on Saturday in Frankfort through utilization of the City of Frankfort Recreation Center. The Recreation Center also facilitates a commercial kitchen.

**Farm to School Program**

The Frankfort/Elberta Area Schools is a leader in the region expanding the use of locally grown food at the school district through the farm to school program. The program has become so successful that Renee DeWindt, Food-Service Coordinator for Frankfort/Elberta Area Schools, has generated a collaborative effort with Benzie Central Schools and Onekama Consolidated Schools to enhance their respective lunch program and utilization of locally grown food. The utilization of locally grown food into breakfast and lunch menus have also lowered overall expenses for the school districts. Partners in addition to Frankfort/Elberta Area Schools, Benzie Central Schools and Onekama Consolidated Schools include the Traverse Bay Intermediate School District, Manistee Intermediate School District, Michigan land Use Institute, local farmers and food processors. The benefits of this program are immense as not only do children have access to healthier, locally raised food but the local economy is enhanced through additional revenue to local farmers and food processors. Not to mention school districts save precious funds and create a collaborative effort that enhance relationships and utilization of resources.

**Natural Resources**

The City of Frankfort's natural environment is an essential component to the community's special "sense of place". Frankfort was established because it is at the confluence of the Betsie River and Lake Michigan. The Betsie Bay Harbor is one of a few naturally protected harbors on Lake Michigan and this environment naturally encouraged the development of Frankfort.

Lake Michigan and Betsie Bay are the greatest assets of the City of Frankfort and serve as a visible reminder of the importance of the City's natural environment. The City of Frankfort has park property adjacent to Betsie Bay that results in over 30% of the shoreline and nearly all of the Lake Michigan shoreline is owned by the City to insure for many generations to come that access to these beautiful natural resources will be allowed and encouraged. In addition to the water, Frankfort boasts sand dunes, bluffs, wetlands and woodlands that truly define the character of the community. The preservation of these natural resources has long been a community value. The natural resources of the community are all of critical long term importance to both the ecological and economic health of the city.

To aid in the long term preservation of the natural resources within the City of Frankfort, the new Zoning Ordinance has a steep slope and storm water management requirement to insure the protection of natural resources in environmental sensitive areas. These guidelines will minimize and/or eliminate non-point source pollution in our waterways and upland erosion. Through our "Tree City USA" designation and continuing growth of tree preservation and plantings, we have established a very sound stewardship program to maintain our "urban" forest resources.

In addition to suitable standards established to minimize destruction to environmentally sensitive areas, the City of Frankfort has performed a vast amount of sanitary and storm water sewer upgrades eliminating combined sewers within the City.

The City of Frankfort is prepared for positive growth as measures have been addressed to preserve the scenic beauty of this community. A significant component of our "sense of place" and "quality of life" is attributable to our natural resources. Our pristine natural resources enabled this community to prosper for over 150 years and through community preservation, we will continue to protect the natural environment for future generations.

**Energy**

Energy policy is one way the City of Frankfort can have a global environmental impact. How can we, as a community, come together and achieve energy independence? Obviously, there are many positive benefits from being energy independent. However, the community and region is torn on what methods of renewable energy and energy independence is best for our needs and environment. On a continuing basis the greatest impact we can have is through conservation. The City of Frankfort, as funds persist, is modernizing all HVAC, lighting systems and building materials in all civic buildings. Beyond conservation, requires the community to take the lead. The City of Frankfort Planning Commission, since work is complete on the new Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance, is going to seek a vast amount of public input to move forward with an energy independent plan. The goal will be to utilize a complete toolbox of alternative energy production that **may** include wind, solar, wave and gasification that will ultimately reduce Frankfort's reliance on the existing energy grid and unsustainable consumption of natural resources. To accomplish the goal of becoming an energy independent community, Frankfort needs to investigate and pursue a number of different alternative energy initiatives including:

* Encourage personal energy efficiency and conservation along with weatherization to help improve residential and commercial energy efficiency.
* Develop wind and solar energy generation guidelines and incorporate these into the Zoning Ordinance as allowable uses subject to administrative review and approval.
* Work with entrepreneurs to encourage alternative energy production in the Frankfort Industrial Park.
* Partner with Consumers Energy, DTE and/or other third party to investigate the feasibility and potential sites for community wind power generation.
* Partner with manufacturers of home and community-scale wind and solar energy collection systems to exploit Frankfort as a demonstration project.
* Pursue federal and state grant programs to fund alternative energy pilots projects.
* Through policies and guidelines established in the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance to facilitate new development activity near the core downtown areas where utilities are available to create a compact, mixed-use and efficient urban area.
* Foster the complete streets policy to encourage walking and non-motorized transportation through expanded utilization of the Beach-to-Beach Trail.
* Modernize all civic buildings to include energy efficient systems including (but not limited to) energy-start rated appliances and windows, efficient HVAC systems, passive solar lighting, motion-sensing lighting, adjustable, timed thermostats, etc.
* Utilize green building techniques for all civic buildings and improvements.
* Encourage the adaptive re-use of old structures in lieu of demolition and new construction by providing an expedited site plan review or other similar incentive program for adaptive re-use.
* Continue to engage the citizens of Frankfort in discussion about renewable energy sources.

The City of Frankfort is a progressive community and we have the leadership to succeed in the New Economy and achieve a "sense of place in the Grand Vision region. The Grand Vision project has many good stewards but it also has many critics. The City of Frankfort was well underway with a vision toward achieving an enhanced community prior to Grand Vision, however the Grand Vision project ignited a new found sense of energy that has steam-rolled progress. That energy created from the Grand Vision project has led to numerous activity in other cities and villages. In Benzie County, a group has launched a revitalization plan to the Village of Honor. The Village of Beulah, through a citizens led process, is working on a new Master Plan. The Village of Elberta is also in the process of developing a new Master Plan and has recently underwent a vast amount of capital improvements. There are numerous other positive activities occurring throughout Benzie County and the region that will lead to the overall success of the Grand Vision project. Northwest Michigan is very special and it is with the spirit achieved with the Grand Vision project that will lead to success in the New Economy within the region.